

News Release

Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex

P.O. Box 1030; 336 Wilna Road, Warsaw, VA 22572

Phone: 804-333-1470; Fax: 804-333-3396; <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/plumtreeisland>

For Immediate Release

For information contact:

Andy Hofmann: 804-333-1470

Plum Tree Island National Wildlife Refuge Seeks Public Input

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking public input on developing its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Plum Tree Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR, refuge). The CCP is required of all national wildlife refuges by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (PL 105-57). The CCP is a 15-year plan designed to provide strategic management direction that best achieves the refuge's purposes; attains the vision and goals developed for the refuge; contributes to the National Wildlife Refuge System mission; addresses key challenges, issues, and relevant mandates; and, is consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management.

Refuge staff are initiating the planning process by hosting public scoping meetings. Public scoping meetings are open to everyone and provide an opportunity for the public to speak directly with refuge staff and comment on what they see as the issues, concerns, and challenges for the refuge over the next 15 years. The meeting format is an informal open house with a brief presentation by refuge staff.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to providing access to these meetings for all participants. Please direct all requests for sign language interpreting services, close captioning, or other accommodation needs to Meghan Carfioli, Natural Resource Planner, at 804-829-5413 or the Federal Relay Service at 1-866-377-8642. Requests for accommodations should be made at least 5 days in advance of these meetings.

Two public scoping meetings are scheduled to be held at the Poquoson City Hall, located at 500 City Hall Avenue, Poquoson, VA 23622 (phone: 757-868-3008) on:

Thursday, September 13th – Poquoson, VA

6:00-8:00 PM

(Refuge presentation at 6:15 PM)

Friday, September 14th – Poquoson, VA

2:00-4:00 PM

(Refuge presentation at 2:15 PM)

Comments are being accepted in person at public meetings or in writing by October 15, 2012. To submit comments or obtain additional information, please contact:

Meghan Carfioli, Natural Resource Planner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
11116 Kimages Rd
Charles City, VA 23030

Phone: (804) 829-5413
Fax: (804) 829-9606
Email: EasternVirginiaRiversNWRC@fws.gov
(Please put "James River CCP" in the subject line)

The refuge planning team will review all the information, data, and comments gathered during public scoping before developing a draft CCP and environmental assessment. The draft plan will be distributed for public review and comment. CCP progress will be updated on the refuge's planning Web site:
<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/PTL/ccphome.html>.

Plum Tree Island NWR is one of four refuges that comprise the Eastern Virginia Rivers NWR Complex. The 3,502-acre refuge is located along the Atlantic Flyway in the city of Poquoson, Virginia. It was established in 1972 to conserve wetlands and important migratory bird habitat in the lower Chesapeake Bay. The refuge's salt marsh, scrub-shrub, and forest habitats support a variety of native wildlife species, including waterfowl, marshbirds, and shorebirds. The refuge's beaches are also home to the federally threatened northeastern beach tiger beetle.

The U.S. Department of Defense previously administered 3,276 acres of the refuge as a gunnery and bombing range. Extensive unexploded ordnance remains on the refuge, posing serious safety concerns. Most of the refuge is closed to public access. The only public use offered is an annual, permit-only, waterfowl hunt on the 211-acre Cow Island Tract.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 150-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses over 550 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 Fish and Wildlife Management offices, and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

-FWS-